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Where Beauty Is

and Other Poems

BY

HENRY JOHNSON
=

"Other heights in other lives, God willing."

BRUNSWICK, MAINE
BYRON STEVENS
1898

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HENRY JOHNSON

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TO F. R. J.

K NOWS the bulb aught of the flower
That lies folded in its bosom,
Ere the earth allures the rootlets
To commingle with its darkness,
And the growing life within it,
Bursting forth, it knows not whither,
Feels the warm, embracing sunlight,
Breathes the fragrance of its being,
Of exultant joy in living?

Loving heart, what can I give thee?

I have nought that still is mine,

But to-morrow and to-morrow

All I shall be, shall be thine.

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I

NATURE

WHERE BEAUTY IS.

I TARRY in the market-place,
Where men pass all unheeding ;
I haunt the lonely shepherdess,
Watching her flocks a-feeding ;
I look down from the clouds of space
When silent winds are leading ;
I gaze from out the beaming face,
Although the heart is bleeding.

I dwell upon the moon lit tower,
That gleams above the valley ;
I sound the soothing midnight hour,
When unlaid spirits sally ;
I paint in glee the cataract's power,
Where thundering demons rally ;
I sigh, though fateful tempests lower,
The pensive maiden's " Shall he ? "

I seek thee not, thou mortal guest,
Nor have I ever bidden
That thou shouldst bare to me thy breast,
Where thousand wounds are hidden.
Yet, if thou chase me, I may rest,
But I will not be chidden,
Till thou hast learned the magic hest,
And I must serve unbidden.

THE DEER IN THE FOREST.

By her own path descending, the deer had come
to slake

Her morning thirst in the waters of the still forest
lake;

Brushing aside the branches that overhanging swept
Her tawny flank as she passed them, she fearless,
dainty, stept

Out of the sheltering shadow; a drinking-while she
stood

Knee-deep, in the sun by the margin, close to her
own green-wood.

Not lifting her head, now plashing she gained the
shore and browsed

The tender shoots and the leafage: till, quick as
light, aroused,

Hunger forgotten, high-lifting her head she curious
peers,

Conning the distant intruder, who fondly silent nears,
Only a gleam, one movement, and she swift bounding
spurns

Rock, moss, all footing, homeward by her own path
returns.

SOLITUDE.

THE maiden in her chamber sings
When at her lowly task
Of every day and common things,
Nor ever stays to ask
Why life is sweet ; for home is dear,
She never questions why,
More than the thrush, whose music clear
Floats 'neath the evening sky.
But let my unknown footstep come
To sound without her door,
At once the happy soul is dumb,
Blessing the world no more.

Deep mystery, strange living soul,
Though known in every mood,
Thyself a part and yet a whole,
Freest in solitude ;
Thyself the player and the played,
Spirit and instrument.
What is it bids me, yea, invade
Thy quiet and content ?
For, maiden, in my sunlit heart
An echo answers thee,
True, clear, and strong, the counterpart
Of thy sweet minstrelsy.

MOUNTAIN MISTS.

GRAY and chill the cloud-mists blow
Across the mountain pass to-day;
Daughters of the wind and snow,
Tell me, whither now away?

All night long we brooded low,
Moving not from peak or side;
Far beneath the streamlets flow,
Still, above, the bright stars glide.

Scarce had the east begun to show
The earliest pallid beams, when, lo!
Our topmost billows gently sway
Beneath the breath of new-born day.
"Westward!" Westward sweeps the tide;
On its noiseless wings we ride.

Drifting, flying, we obey
Him who is our only guide,
Staying, if he bids us stay,
Hiding, if he bids us hide
In the heavenly fields that glow
When the western sun is low.

THE CASTLE.

OLD, grim and gray
Above the bay
The lordly castle frowns.
The dull mists sweep
From off the deep
And drench the grassy downs.

Lordly castle, grim and gray,
Where is he who in the fray
Smote the paynim foe,
Dauntless, spotless served his lord,
Modest earned a king's reward
In the long ago?

"Earth and ocean keep
Their own in trusting sleep,
While ages come and go.
Our life is but a day
But virtue bides alway;
That is enough to know."

Gray, grim and old,
May years untold
Lend thee their soundless speech,
And countless days
Men come to gaze
As I do from this beach.

IN THE MONASTERY GARDEN.

THOU God, who 'st placed me here and now,
Show'st me my mastery and how
To rule myself yet more each day,
As slowly, surely 'neath my sway
I guide each element to be
The servant of the god in me.

Can it be arrogance to talk
With Thee, my God, while here I walk,
And watch my growing garden thrive,
While all my lilies seem to strive
To speak to me of the new birth,
When I like them shall spring from earth?

With mansions must be flowers too —
Would He had told us, for He knew
About the very blossoms there,
Whose fragrance fills the heavenly air,
And scarce you tell it ere it dies
Away into the summer skies.

Long since my books I left unsought,
For me, the dullard, Thou hast taught
By growing blade and scented bloom,
That there must be in heaven room
For humble service, whence shall rise
The odor of blest sacrifice.

THE SEVEN PINES.

THE wind is ever sighing,
The clouds are ever flying,
The distant waters roar ;
The birds of spring come nesting,
The new brood flies unresting,
The green leaves are no more.

Here stand we brothers seven
At peace beneath the heaven,
And stand, and sway, and stand ;
We greet the high sun, burning,
We greet the moon, returning,
We watch the Pleiad band.

II

ART

THE ARTISTS' ADORATION.

ACCCEPT, O God, the worship of our deeds,
Lives used in looking on Thy unveil'd face,
That through our hands an image of Thy grace
Though rudely wrought may body forth our creed.

Thou great I Am, we see Thee present here,
Thy beauty beaming in the mother's eyes
Watching her slumbering child, nor scan the skies
For glory coming from some distant sphere.

Thou here with us! We bide to hear no more,
Thy loving, ever learning children we.
We know that Thou art true for we can see;
We sound no depths who stand upon the shore.

CHEOPS TO THE SPHINX.

I CAN not know what thou, immortal sphinx,
Art brooding on, nor what thy up-cast gaze
Has been awaiting since the birth of days,
Unheeding all that god or mortal thinks.

Shalt thou live on in changeless thought, and I,
I, earth's sole lord, all men, all riches mine,
Must I from noon-tide of my power decline
And hide my glory 'neath the western sky?

I too will live, by thee I too will wait.
Here on the desert's edge my timeless home,
A mountain four-square shall tell all who roam :
'Be still! Lo, Egypt's lord in silent state'!

Its peak as high above the heads of men
As I o'ertop the world in majesty,
Shall hail the day-star in the eastern sky
And last shall see him sink beyond my ken ;

Shall watch the land whence flows the river forth
With tribute of my boundless teeming south.
His springs, his either bank serve me. His mouth
Adds ever to the sea that guards the north.

THE PRAYER OF PERICLES.

O VIRGIN goddess, daughter of the brain,
Hear me, the leader of thy chosen state,
As lifting grateful palms I consecrate
This house for thine indwelling without stain.

We give thee thanks, that first-born of the free,
Our fathers dared judge all things undismayed,
And, restless searchers of earth's law, obeyed
As earth revealed her hid divinity.

Theirs the eternal glory to have won
The city's liberty; be ours to share
Earth's gratitude as long as freedom's air
Shall bathe thy temple, gleaming in the sun.

We bring thee but ourselves; our mother's breast,
Our own Pentelicus, we wrought to enshroud
Thy majesty, nor deemed our eager crowd
Unwelcome to the council of the blest.

No longer our defiant citadel,
This hill be sacred to thine ordered peace,
Throne of thy spirit where all murmurs cease,
And beauty mirroring thy thought shall dwell.

THE CATHEDRAL ARCHITECT.

How plainly I can see the pride that glowed
Like living fire in that keen, piercing eye!
I trembled as he spoke, I know not why,
For I e'er paid the debt of faith I owed.

"My son, I know thy zeal," thus he began,
"Thy fame among the craftsmen. Hast thou more,
Art thou indeed a master, canst explore
The inner world and give its dream a plan?"

"Know that the Holy Church decreed of late
In answer to the commune's prayer, that here
Shall rise the noblest pile that man can rear
With earthly means to enshrine the heavenly state

"Of Our Most Blessed Lady." Then a nod
Of swift decision; and a smile o'erspread
His face as, blessing me, "Make thou," he said,
"A very chamber of the heart of God."

That instant stronger all my being thrilled
With joy unbearable until each chart
Took on its burden and the final part
Finds me an old man. Well—my son shall build.

VENUS OF MILO.

I SAW her first in spring-time by the shore
As she stood watching evening's brightest star
Take on its dazzling splendor when the car
Of day had sunk beneath the west once more.

I knew a god was with me and I vowed
To the unknown a life of purest zeal
And henceforth daily prayed it to reveal
To my still heart the name to praise aloud.

How dear thy secret in the silent years
When wandering far I locked my breast to love
And living to my art alone I strove
To learn to greet the god when he appears.

And then thou camest, loved one of my dreams,
Emerging from the marble in her form,
The very shape of her, whom living, warm,
I saw of old stand tranced by thy beams!

Grant me but this: I pray thee that my name
May at thy feet live with thy beauty's life
In heavenly shelter far above all strife
Secure forever in thy deathless fame.

THE GOTHIC SCULPTOR.

HE has an elder brother's right, I grant,
And all that love enjoins I love to yield;
One mother led us children to the field,
And, if man-grown I tarry, should he taunt

Me, idle dreamer, watching in the wood
The tender leaf that beckons me to stop,
The careless bird upon the swaying top,—
And I alone am sad, misunderstood.

Does he think towers, pillars, roofs are all,
And what I carve as bird and leaf is nought
But child's play, or some wanton figure brought
From distant fairy lands fantastical?

It can not be! We seek one honour; one
Be thine to rear the house of God, and mine
To crown the column with the wreathing vine,
Or bold in love give to God's Only Son

A form and features, that with lifted hands
He may be seen of all who come to pray
Within His gates, nor let one go away
Unblest by the one heart which understands.

MICHELANGELO AT WORK ON HIS
"DAVID."

I F, Master Agostino, ignorance
Or any fault of thine have been the cause,
Thou payest dearly for the broken laws
And groundless trusting in thine empty chance.

Hadst thou the will but yet couldst not dispel
The mists that held thy cloudy prophet in?
But God forgive me the presumptuous sin!
— Have I dreamed this before my mallet fell?

"I loved, and in the ancient days I laid
The firm foundations of the daring hills
And gave them white stone pure as their own rills,
And knew the land was good which I had made.

When the true son of that my faithful race,
Tending his little flock in Palestine,
Gave me his whole heart's love and challenged mine,
I loved and taught him and hid not my face.

My son, if thou wilt consecrate to me
Thy present powers, thou shalt be like him,
And from the prisoning marble, vague and dim,
He shall come forth in nature's majesty."

LEONARDO AND THE PRIOR.

I WONDER if his way to holiness
Is narrow and straight upward, never winds
Through mazy forest whose enchantment binds
The weary traveller with fond caress

Of breeze scarce scented with the faint perfume
Of unseen flowers, while the melting light
Softens the terror of the loveless night
Into calm melancholy's tender gloom.

Ere I had dared to hope to picture Him,
I paid the price of years' obedience
To earthly laws till I was master; thence
I hoped for certainty, but ever dim

That face of unknown suffering is there
In silent majesty forbidding me
To come too nigh, lest I too weak should see
The pain men made Him suffer, and despair.

I can not enter in within the pale
Of that ineffable distress and live;
Enough that it be granted me to give
My clouded vision of His fleshly veil.

RAPHAEL'S MADONNA, LA BELLE
JARDINIÈRE.

HAS only Italy that peaceful dome
Which calm souls gaze into when heavenward
The rapt heart sighs itself in blest regard,
Awaiting, when God wills, its summons home?

Hast thou grown silent as one far apart
From shock and turmoil of the present strife,
Living in memory thy lovers' life,
Now Alps, now Ætna in thine aged heart?

Was ever day more dear to thee than when
Thy Raphael stood by his mother's knee,
And looked and learned the blessed mystery
Of brooding love, dearest of gifts to men?

And when he passed from strength to strength, serene
In manhood's power, his loving heart would share
The Mother's joys and sought to lay them bare
In the calm gaze of this sweet Florentine.

Though the fair gardener, though grass and flower,
Though distant hill and cloud and heaven's blue
Be but a vision, would all were as true
Of that I see and handle here this hour.

TITIAN'S LA BELLA IN THE PITTI.

A GE shall succeed forgotten age till comes
The perfect day of all-surpassing power.
Countries on countries sink that they may dower
The youngest, mightiest land with countless sums.

A city in these last days shall arise
Rich with the spoil of war on every sea,
Whose greatest son shall through a century
Train hand and brain to serve his seeing eyes.

Her thousand daughters shall be fair but one
Shall be a single day o'er all supreme,
And that day shall he see her and redeem
The time ere Beauty's fated course be run.

O happy Venice! Let another wed
Another sovereign of great Beauty's realm!
Although thine aged hand has loosed the helm
Thy glory is secure with thy great dead.

Another country rear another race
And send her willing sons to learn of thee
How they may win, if it is so to be,
Among the ages honour's resting-place.

DAVID.

O H for one moment of the cooling air
That fanned my heated body ere I slept
When I lay down beside the flock I kept,
And slew in dream a second time the bear !

She was a coward, hiding by the brook
To fall upon a tired, lagging sheep,
The last to clamber down the dusky steep,
And I a lad with just a shepherd's crook.

I heard the crash and then the first, faint moan,
And turning in the shadows I discerned
Where steadily two savage eyeballs burned.
I stooped and groping seized a smooth, round stone.

Breathless I rose erect and leveled low
A steady aim upon those angry eyes ;
And deadly as the bolt from August skies
The silent missile dealt the avenging blow.

Up to the fold the stricken lamb I bore
And laid it down in safety ; then unslung
My shepherd's harp nor ceased till I had sung
My thanks to Him who saves forevermore.

BEETHOVEN'S MUSIC TO "FAUST."

O GOD of loving mercy, wilt Thou deign
To hear my prayer that yet a little while,
Only a little space I may beguile
This misery, creating once again ?

Be it not yet in vain that I have learned
To weave the myriad-coloured robe of thought,
With purest gold and richest gems inwrought,
While in my heart of hearts thy fire burned.

If it be wrong, my brother, to have grieved
At thy distress, and sought to enter in
To all that's hidden, then our art is sin
And we are all deceivers and deceived.

My sister, I have lived thy life with thee
From merry childhood to the thoughtful days
Of womanhood with forward-looking gaze
And suffered with thee in thine agony.

And paid the utmost farthing to atone
For all thou didst, and found at last release
From this world's mystery in perfect peace.
— Fetch me my book and leave me here alone.

WAGNER.

WHOM shall I purify? Whose soul is strong
To lift the burden of a hero's grief
And dare to be reborn to give relief
To his immortal suffering in song?

Canst thou with me sustain that glory's light,
Which bathes the young god's earthly, human form?
Canst thou undaunted gird thee for the storm
To buffet death itself and sink in night?

Prove thou thy mind and heart lest impotent
Thou learn her boundless sorrow and be dumb,
So, false to her whose hate could overcome
The sister's love she bore nor would relent

Till on her ear that elemental roar
As of some helpless, caged and butchered thing
Now dies away, now rises thundering
To die again, and all is peace once more.

Too much! Not yet, great shadows of the brain,
Not yet! Be all your fireless passions mute,
Until, O music's poet, resolute
Thou bid them rise to love and hate again.

THE AGED HOMER, ASLEEP.

Pour him out yet another cup of wine,
That when he rouses he may drink more deep
The draught of honour. Soft ! See that thou keep
Thy vigil silent by that form divine.

He stirs again ! He smiles, nor longer seems
The weary, blind old man. No more those eyes
That gazed so fondly on these woods and skies
Shall see this earthly radiance save in dreams.

Long since I stood a princeling at thy knee,
And thrilled to hear the very shock of arms,
While earth and heaven shook with war's alarms,
And ringing swords hewed out the victory.

I wept to hear the dauntless heroes groan,
I smote the Trojans at Achilles' side,
My heart was broken when Patroclus died,
I shuddered as I heard his spirit moan.

Sleep on ! Never henceforth from out our souls
Shall fade the glorious light of those great days,
But age shall pass to age thy deathless praise,
Knowing no bounds save where the ocean rolls.

To honour thee, great poet of the soul,
 And with thee her whose life illumined thine,
 Deem me not rash, if thankful I entwine
 My wreathed thoughts and hang this votive scroll.

For me 'twas not in vain the ages bred
 Thy warrior ancestor to take the cross
 And die for Holy Church, scorning the loss
 Of earthly days, if heaven's work be sped.

For me thy boyhood's love saw in those eyes
 The very light of heaven beaming clear
 A while to leave thee in the darkness here,
 Yet soon to draw thee unto Paradise.

By what dread paths! Could aught but heavenly grace
 Have stayed thy human reason 'mid such woes,
 To see thine own loved friends among the foes
 Of God, forever banished from His face!

For me thy spirit buffeted was just;
 For me thou gav'st to toil thy bitter days.
 Take thou from me my little gift of praise,
 Thou who hast taught me in myself to trust.

OF SHAKESPEARE.

I LOOKED adown the ages through the eyes
Of Abraham as, gazing o'er the plain,
He saw unbroken the ever-lengthening chain
Of faithful followers touch at last the skies.

I throbbed in Homer's quicker heaving breast
As to his faithfully recording tongue
A beauty grander than had e'er been sung
Came flowing with my eager soul's unrest.

I ruled the conquered world by Caesar's hand,
And bowed all peoples to obey my law ;
My faithful minister grown master saw
My secret and we fettered every land.

I shone in Beatrice's gentle gaze,
Seeming but love to Dante's tender youth,
Till to his faithful heart I gleamed as truth,
And drew him to my source in heaven's rays.

I loved thee most of all the sons of men,
My Shakespeare, ever-faithful lover mine.
What ecstasy I knew with thee to shine
The whole world through, and rest, to love again !

MONA LISA.

I too have heard the music in the brain,
Till all my earth obeyed the heavenly strain,
And, rapt, enjoyed —— for memory is vain.

Look on these eyes and lips that vainly smile;
Could she, herself a captive bound, beguile
With an unloving, mocking heart the while?

Fair soul, in fairest temple richly shrined,
Thou wouldst not, nay, thou couldst not loose thy mind,
In music's mystery far off confined.

TRIBUTE.

COULD the cunning chemist mingle
Earth and Fire, till each single
Element, in secret plighted,
Wed its mate, for aye united,
And the workman's skill perfect it
Till no master could detect it
From the purest, best wrought gem,
The jewel of a diadem,—
Then would I hope with my desire
To take and blend with my heart's fire
My knowledge of thy proved worth,
For the crown of thy fame, thou sweet singer of earth !

INSPIRATION.

I PLAY for the joy of playing,
That I may but seem free,
And live, if only a moment,
The life of infinity,

Where is no upward nor downward,
Center nor bound, save where
A thought of God incorporate
Vibrates in radiant air.

Only in dream confined as yet,
Only this once perchance
Is it my lot, half-knowing, half-skilled,
To breathe with the rhythmic dance

Of the Motions, that swaying, swinging,
Circle in softest sweep,
Trailing their clouds of glory,
Murmuring the dying sleep.

* * * * *

Vanished the vision, and waking eyes
Open to stare distressed,
In vain now piercing the brightest east,
Now scanning the fading west.

Be, proud soul, with thy every power,
Dare be the dauntless lover
Of God and all His, and with Him create
What the world shall yet discover.

Not hidden from men, but sacred as day,
Common and good as the faithful truth,
Dare yet to be and to say what thou art,
And grow to thy ageless youth.

TO A MUSICIAN, WHO WOULD NOT PLAY.

UNLOVING soul, unthrifty to forget
Christ's story of the talents and the bank!
Is it not then enough that we should thank?
Exactest thou another payment yet?

Did Nature deal with thee so niggardly?
Should we then see thy talents are but one?
Is it so wisely mean in thee to shun
The fellow gratitude we share with thee?

We poor ones peer and listen in the dark,
Knowing there shall be light, and that sweet sound
To us obedient shall the more abound.
We ask not what thou poor mayst lack, the spark

Creative. Children at a grandam's knees
Hear gratefully old tales, losing no word,
Though told the hundredth time. Hast thou not heard
Some melody, though older far than these,

Some faint reverberation of a hope
An angel may have breathed when Eden closed,
Or some immortal echo of man's scope
Creation's Sabbath voiced, when God reposed?

THE POETS.

THE poet, the heir of the seers of old,
Was searching his treasures of worth untold
For some vision of hope on the ancient page,
That figured his own, the barren age.
He knew that the Hebrew prophet forecast
The future of myriads as a tale of the past,
And trusted that by some story or token
The Spirit of the coming, of his age had spoken.

He sought in the fullest faith, nor stayed
In old age his search for the truth that delayed,
Till they said,—the judges, the wise in what seems :
His life has been wasted, the old man but dreams !
Till the day of his death he had sought it in vain,
When the strong spirit fleeing its body of pain,
Smiled triumphant at last without an endeavour,
To speak—and the poor lips were silent forever.

The young poet mourned for the words unsaid,
As though his were hunger that they could have fed ;
But his brave heart spoke : “ Though of worth untold
Be these vessels of truth, I will seek the gold
Buried deep in the earth, and with all the skill
That can spring from the firmest love and will
Bid Truth breathe in Beauty, the child of my spirit,
That the ages to come may of me inherit.”

THE RHYTHMIC SPIRITS.

WHAT dost thou mean here with dainty, dactylic
step
Tripping along and so lightly recovering,
Gracefully balancing, artfully drawing near,
Artfully drawing back, roguish, coquettish maid!

What a flutter and a clatter!
Rattling Trochee, cease your prattling!
Oh, the endless buzz of nonsense
As the smiling Trochee leaves me!

Thou Jester, come! Iambic, ho!
What halls of festal odes thou bidst
Arise! Thy friends are millions! I,
This little, daring I am too!

Who comes? Whose pace so slow reveals
The hard weight borne, long grief, deep pain?
Thy face and mien are sad. Who art
Thou veiled? So grave I fear to speak!

THE REST OF ME, THE BEST OF ME.

I.

I. **A** PPEAR! Appear!
Love awakes for thou art near!
Not so quick, my eager heart!
She too loves, she feels the smart
Of passion in her loving breast
And seeking me she can not rest.
Here! I am here!

She. Close, gently, close,
Eyes that restless seek repose!
Only I, yes, I alone
Know thee and by thee am known.
Thou and I, just I and thou!
The world is ours forever —, now!
My bosom glows!

Each. Fair, equal soul,
We two will watch the ages roll;
Joy in all His love reveals,
Silent, if His love conceals,
Our love and beauty shall create
Beauty and love of endless date,
Soul of my soul!

II.

I see her look of trustful peace
Shed soft effulgence, as when cease
The sultry showers, and the rays
Slant eastward through the pearly haze,
And where but now was mortal gloom
Her angel presence fills the room.

A perfect woman without taint,
Pure, nor yet a snowy saint,
Living, breathing earth's sweet air,
Heart unclouded with a care —
All too much that I must know
Of these background depths of woe.

The fettered glory of her hair
Gleams beauty's very halo there ;
Flowing robe of tenderest pink,
Sweeping folds that following sink,
As with smiling, longing eyes
She bids me share her heaven's prize,
The peerless rose of Paradise.

III

VARIOUS

“FACE THOU THY FATE!”

F^{ACE} thou thy fate,
Whether destruction and the fruit
Of weakness come, be resolute,
And firmly wait !

Or joy be thine ;
Welcome the blessing, nor esteem
Thy gift but as an answered dream
Of bliss divine.

Hope not, nor fear
The world without : to that within
Be true, and, knowing thou must sin,
Look up, not here !

NERVES.

I MAY be supersensitive ; beg pardon,
I am so, once for all ; meanwhile you thump
Your wooden chair in time, nor dream it's hard on
My nerves, which give with every beat a jump.

Would I choke up the channels of your learning,
Forbid the healthy exercise of soul,
Lessen one jot the ever-forward yearning
Impelling you, if blindly, toward your goal ?

This much we know, that infinitely precious
To each one is his own birth-dated gift,
Twice blest, if publicly it shall refresh us,
Blest too my private lute without a rift.

What yet of rights you know not may God teach you !
Pending which consummation just believe
Silence is fittest till His message reach you,
When you shall give, I meekly will receive.

ON —, WHO IN OLD AGE DEEMED
YOUTH VAIN.

AND think you, forsooth,
That the flower of youth
Is not fairer to God
Than the withered, ripe pod
With its shaking seed ?
A fig for your creed !
Blest had you but learned
That the beauty you spurned
Must in death be rebought,
That the leanness you sought
Must be buried till earth
In its cycle of birth
Has taken your heart
To render each part
To the grass and the rain,
To the oak and the grain !

THE GOTHIC CHIEFTAIN.

STRIKE for your lives !
I at your head,
Be cursed of the dead
Who basely survives !

INSCRIPTION FOR THE OUTER GATEWAY
OF A RETREAT FOR THE INSANE.

FRIEND, here live they whose lives are but a dream,
A fancy, and whose eyes are oped in vain ;
Whose hopes are uttered, while their fellows keep
Their dreams deep-buried in their breasts. They wait,
And wait, but Death alone shall wake the imprisoned.

IV

TWELVE SONNETS

BY FONTAINEBLEAU TO BARBIZON.

I.

How far behind us now the city lay,
Heavily murmuring in the autumn heat!
Almost forgotten, too, the long, paved street,
Cutting the forest like a Roman way,
Dusty, direct. There where the artists stray
Northward to Barbizon our weary feet
Followed their steps to where the four ways meet.
Thence onward in the common, glaring day,
Till now the sun from out the yellow west
Spread ever deepening silence and repose
Throughout each dusky vale, o'er every crest.
The weary day declined so near its close —
Was peace its gift? Should we then be thus blest,
Lulled in the thoughtless quiet childhood knows?

II.

The world is with us! Why should these invade
This rustic solitude and turn its street
Into a row of restaurants where meet
The staring and the certain? Gentle shade,
That wanderest in some Elysian glade
Than this thine earthly dwelling scarce more sweet,
Whose spirit if not thine bade us retreat
To where the forest genius showed displayed
A scene such as thou lovedst? Cooler haunt
'Neath brooding evening silence is there none.
No light more charmed could great Parnassus vaunt
Than o'er this wood from out that heaven shone,
Nor falling spell more potent to enchant,
Than thine, full-orbed moon, o'er Barbizon.

THE FALLS.

How smoothly flow the waters as they roll
Their idle burden toward the rounded steep,
Beyond which, plunging thundering to the deep,
The flood falls heavy to the spray-swept bowl;
Then bubbling, swirling spurns the bank's control
And glides in brimming fulness to where sleep
The lingering eddies, as if aught could keep
Great Nature's currents, moving toward their goal.
Sweet days of life by childhood's gathering rills,
Of boyhood's placid stream, bathed in the sun,
Of manhood's tide,—if so, with God to fall,
Or, if it shall be, calm beneath the hills
Move seaward silent till its course be run,
I love you and I thank Him for you all.

FUTILE THINKING.

THOU fair, white paper, waiting for the ink,
Of patience infinite should thought delay,
Or swift as thought when Fancy's lightnings play
About the little world, why do I think,
Letting cold meditation's plummet sink
Athwart the universe, or bid the ray
Of dauntless reason pierce the Milky Way
To spy if there be not some smallest chink
Through which to peep at the real heaven? No!
No longer strive thou now, poor brain, to find
Another measurement to register!
Great Nature bides; but we, how swift we go!
Then one unto my very heart I'll bind,
And in my idlest musings be with her.

THE KING TO THE QUEEN.

O SWEETEST dear ! Forgive the errant thought,
Token of this true love which cannot rest,
Although thine ever pure, clear life attest
The priceless treasure my whole soul has bought !
Long years have passed since first my reason sought,
Love-guided, to besiege the virgin crest
Of thy heart's citadel, till both should wrest
The victory, for heart joined brain and fought.

One instant mine, that fortress then was ours !
Float on the idle wind, or, prouder yet,
Brave thou the storm, my flag, around these towers !
The sovereign is within, the watch is set,
Love's sleepless sentry at the Queen's own bowers,
Where to the King alone he cries, Well met !

ALPHEUS SPRING PACKARD.

WHO may unawed gaze on thy pensive form,
Or see thy reverend head bent down in thought
Of things not here, thy memory richly fraught
With images of days of calm or storm
Long past, when hearts now dust beat quick and warm?
Or do these crowding shapes still live for thee
As real as that of Him thou soon shalt see?
The years be many ere the Touch transform
Thy faith to sight, to rob us of that voice,
Whose accents led us, thoughtless, to revere
The legacy of time, and to rejoice
In hopes that perfect scatter every fear.
O aged Prophet of the better choice,
Pardon the needy, who would keep thee here!

SISTER ANNIE.

I LOVE thee, Annie! Bright soul ever pure,
Amid thy joys unspeakable still keep
A living thought of me, poor me! who weep
The silent tears of constancy, secure
In hope that though these year-long cares endure
The day will come when thy swift wings will sweep
In radiant beauty down high heaven's steep,
And I shall see His promises are sure.

Best gift of God, clear ever-burning flame
Of love, which earthly grossness can not taint,
Upon thine altar in my heart this day
I cast fresh incense in the blessed name
Of her who loved me and who now Thy saint
Follows the bright as I the dusky way.

TO T.

G o, little verse, to her whom thou shalt greet,
And in the right of trusted messenger
Tell her thou knowest,—tell thou only her,
That—, that—. “Dull mortals crowd the common street,
Eagerly speeding with unresting feet
To hide their empty pain in noisiest stir
Of senseless Fortune’s heart-benumbing whirl,
Despairing, hoping She and they may meet.”

What! Hast thou then for all I send no tongue,
But pratest of the rabble’s formless woes?
—I will not blame thee, when my faltering word
Stammers its message, which could it be sung,
Should breathe a tenderer blessing than the rose,
In melody of haunting dreams, half heard.

ORIGINALITY.

A FEW acquaintances, a little span
Of time in which to tune the instrument,
Masters and models half by Fortune sent,
Guided, misguided, ere his life began,—
What wonder if, so slow to unlearn, man
Spend all his days in doubtful pain intent
To learn by study what great Genius meant,
Wielding the diapason in its plan?
Shall I be awed to silence and distrust,
If in my own true joy and suffering
I may not blend the well-remembered chords,
As though 'twere better to be new than just,
As though 'twere not best gift of all to bring
A self-wrought melody in simple words !

HALF-LIFE.

Is it all plain? Are you so sure that laws
Determine every slightest movement made
By quivering lip or trembling tear-drop stayed
On sorrow's lid when coming hope gives pause?
Must you chase backward from effect to cause
The loving or the hating heart displayed
In instant action, every power arrayed,
Straining for self, despising Fortune's flaws?

I will not deem God meant my soul should lack
The strength of strength, the will to do my will,
And should not in His world to self be true;
Else would I bid Him call my half-life back
To the great sea of His own being, till —
Forgive me, for Thou knowest me through and through.

IMAGO MORTIS.

I SUMMONED all my strength, nor did I dread
Whatever nameless terror wrapped it round,
Were it of purple darkness without sound,
And plunged — swift, ever swifter downward sped
Through rushing winds that cooled my fevered head,
Till, miracle ! the very cloths that bound
My aching body suddenly unwound,
Enfolding me as fleeciery cloud instead.

I heard no voice forbidding me — “ Not yet ! ”
No hand was there before my open eyes ;
Nothing but peace was there to soothe my mind.
I grieved no more, although my cheeks seemed wet
With tears for her whom over all I prize,
And in that sea of glory I was blind.

THE SCULPTOR AND THE CHILD.

I VOWED to put my bitterness of heart
In everlasting bronze to be a sign
To teach slow-witted men 'twere best repine
At once, nor seek to soothe life's daily smart.
I moulded passionately : never art
Of sculptor glowed in him hotter than mine,
As, seeking human truth, spurning divine,
I made my Jester,— me, playing my part.
I knew not what was in my loveless rage,
Nor what quaint spirits made me then their sport,
Until I heard a little child declare :
“How I should like to be a little page,
And live with such a good man at a court,
And never think of work, and never care.”

V

LOVE

LOVE WANDERING.

WHEN Love goes out to find one,
One young and pretty,
And if he chance to bind one
Within his airy smile-net,
He has no heart to pity,
This cruel captor.
See, there he peeps a while yet
In plots enwrap, or
Like a shy, young maiden
Seems to wait demurely!
His every look is laden
With the sweetest, speechless asking!
There his airy form seems basking
In thine eyes' light so securely.
Would he spurn thee?
Shed thy dazzling light around him,
Ah! Thy light cannot confound him,
But reflected it shall burn thee!
Hear his begging plea so artful,
As he begs for mercy! Hear him!
How he prays thee not to fear him!
His lips breathe such submission,
While his eyes proclaim his heart full!
Thou mayst rob him of that treasure!

If thou stretch thy hand to grasp it,
He, the wary, he will clasp it !
Thine whole life long shalt thou rue it,
Prayers and tears cannot undo it.
Thou shalt know the fullest measure
Of contrition !

“WHAT MATTER IF THE SKY WERE
GRAY.”

WHAT matter if the sky were gray,
And streets were chill and wet,
Our souls looked from our eyes that day,
The day when first we met.

I felt no more my heavy care,
I bade my brain forget,
As thou wert passing by me there,
The day when first we met.

'Twas but a moment and I knew
The love I cherish yet;
I saw that thou hadst suffered too,
The day when first we met.

An instant seen and swept away!
O vision of regret!
I knew thee but thou wouldst not stay,
That day when last we met.

LOVE, THE ARTIFICER.

WHOSE is gold for the getting,
And pearls for the setting,
And who is the artist clever,
Wiser than all the sons of men,
Who makes, and breaks, and makes again,
And will make on forever ?

Whose patterns are new, whose patterns are old,
Who cries no wares, yet all are sold,
This magical old designer ?

What is the figment of the brain,
The fragile, the adamantine chain,
The bond, than all diviner ?

The secret of the whole round earth,
The instant's mystery of birth,
The reasonless attraction ?
What beats in the breast of the meanest ?
What breathes in the prayer of the cleanest ?
This seasonless attraction !

CONSECRATION.

OVER all the winter snows
Cold and bleak lie everywhere.
Little he the gardener knows
Training all with equal care
That thy mother's stock shall bear
Thee of flowers most blest, most fair.

Soft and warm the west-wind blows,
Early summer's vagrant air.
Know'st thou, maiden, why I chose
This from all thy blossoms rare,
Just a rose for her to wear
When she's kissed it, blushing there?

Now rich autumn's beauty glows,
Golden wealth beyond compare.
In our hearts a sure repose,
Ours the bliss the angels share,
Ours a courage that could dare
Face a world of dull despair.

White the mantle Nature throws
Over hill and valley bare.
Soft her footsteps as she goes
In her chamber to prepare
To receive the coming heir.
Out of doors lie everywhere
Cold and bleak the winter snows.

“ALONE I LOVE TO WHISPER!”

ALONE I love to whisper
The dearest name love gave
Or shall give evermore.
What else can ye pines lisp or
What else ye great waves roar,
Or wavelet splash to wave?

Dear world, so bright about her,
Sweet song, upon her lips,
O sun, for her on high,
What were ye all without her
But mute and black eclipse?
My God! oh what were I?

Down, heartless, phantom terror,
With “Ah!” and “But!” and “If!”
That sickly fancy breeds!
If not, then welcome, Error!
No other wings it needs,
Plunge with me down this cliff!

I'd die if aught befel her,
My tender, loving dear;
All else could not atone.
I will make haste and tell her
In whisper low and near
The name we know alone.

THE EASTERN BRIDE'S SONG.

DEEP and clear, quiet and cool
Is welling my heart's spring.
Come, my love, rest by its pool,
Hither thy fever bring.

And we will bless Him, who made
Thee as thou art and me,
Sing as we walk in the shade
To our lives' harmony.

All thine to rule save the Fears,
That ever free must roam,
Guarding the fountain of tears,
Hid in the sacred gloom.

Enter, my lord, thy domain,
Wide open are the gates;
Thine hill, valley and plain —
Thy loving servant waits.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S SONG.

 I COME to take thee, my own,
 Thou dearer than vital breath,
Take thee, full-gifted, alone,
 All mine till the sleep of death.

Oh start not, gentle my dear,
 True love is tender and strong,
Love knows nor blindness nor fear,
 Can not or think or do wrong.

I hungered ; hunger is wise,
 The Mother's gift to us all,
Pleads in the child's eager eyes,
 Utters the whole being's call.

What if unknown are the years,
 True beats the heart in the breast ;
Joy be the source of our tears,
 Deeds bring the blessing of rest.

IN THE GARDEN.

WHY not, dear living love ?
Were we not made to be
None other than just we ?
Then let them joy above,
Whom better tastes incline,
Nor grudge we those the wine,
Whom baser pleasures move.

We were not made to teach
In set and formal talk
Our equals how to walk
In wisdom's ways and reach
The hand for just the fruit
Whose cooling juices suit
The sober needs of each.

Here in the sunshine warm
Let my rude hand now grasp
Thine whose soft, tender clasp
Doth every sense inform
With its subduing grace,
Till peace fills every place,
And lulled is passion's storm.

Let all men, all, all thrive !
I envy none that share
With me this precious air,
In which thou art, alive ;
Nor will we cringe when death
Shall stay the tides of breath,
And we no longer strive.

My sole prayer this, that brief
May be the days that part
The dead and living heart
In sorrow's empty grief.
Sweet, sweet the first life now
With thee beneath the bough,
That thrills in every leaf.

LOVE AND DEATH AT THE GATE.

HAND in hand we wandered, peering
Through the darkness of the night,
Neither hoping nor yet fearing
What should be the unknown sight ;
But we trusted all was well.

What was that? Was ever thunder
Heavier with portending doom ?
See ! Did not an angel sunder
Heaven and earth athwart the gloom ?
But we trusted all was well.

Onward without rest, till turning
Suddenly you bade me wait,
For, you said, your heart was burning,
Not far off the Inward Gate ;
But we trusted all was well.

Still I feel that moment's anguish
As we parted ere the dawn,
I all sick at heart to languish
As the age-long hours wore on ;
But we trusted all was well.

Was it not a cry of terror,
That came back — “ Help, or I die ! ”
Or my cruel fancy’s error,
Voicing what it feared was nigh ?
But we trusted all was well.

Deeper yet in pain descending,
Yours to suffer, mine to wait,
As you fought alone, contending
With the Angel at the Gate ;
But we trusted all was well.

“ The life is mine. Take mine, if only
It may live.— I will not yield ! ”
You were struggling, weary, lonely,
Love with Death upon the field ;
But we trusted all was well.

Then you came, the dear life bringing
In Love’s own resistless might,
As the Easter bells were ringing
Christ the conqueror of the night ;
For we trusted all was well.

FOR HER BIRTHDAY.

IF in narrow bounds of verse,
Foolish, I would fain rehearse
What my loving duty owes,
Then were there as little room
As finds in me the rich perfume
Of the bounteous, matchless rose.

If your heart would know how much
Every look of yours and touch
Draws us to your open arms,
Ask these maiden violets
If sweet Mother Nature sets
Any bound to loving charms.

Fairest flowers must decay,
Swiftly breathing life away,
Fleet perfection's moment past.
Changing, bid us change no more,
Dying, teach us deathless lore,
Power's perfect growth at last.

“I WILL BE TRUE, BE THOU!”

My heart, my heart is mine, love,
E'en though it be the vine, love,
That doth fondly twine, love,
About the lordly tree.

Though with thee yet alone, love,
All thine and yet mine own, love,
Had we both but known, love,
In that first ecstasy!

And art thou too the same, love,
As when the suitor came, love?
Are we then to blame, love,
If we are wiser now?

I gave and trusted too, love;
Must I be more than true, love?
My heart — Oh, would I knew, love!
I will be true, be thou!

“I MET HER WANDERING BY THE
BROOK.”

I MET her wandering by the brook,
But for no brook recked she,
For emptiness was in her look
And stunned expectancy.

Her parted lips seemed waiting yet,
As though they soon would speak
The word 'twould tell me why so wet
Her eye and streaming cheek.

She saw me not, although I stood
Not two score steps away,
And leafless now the chilly wood
That clear November day.

Or, if she saw me, she did feign —
But no, poor heart, 'twas I,
Who dreaded lest my gaze profane
Thy prayer, when God was nigh.

And ere I reached the aged oak
To hide me from her sight,
I saw her closer draw her cloak,
And stare as though in fright.

I know not what she saw to dread
 Beneath those boughs so drear;
Her whole frame quivered as she said
 In agony: “Nor here!”

The brown leaf shook, the yellow rocked
 Upon the lifeless stem.
God pity hearts where Death has knocked!
 Swift angels, succor them!

LADY MARGARET.

WHY so still the live-long day
Watch the clouds sail far away
While the wheeling ravens call?
Are your eyelids never wet
With full tears, fair Margaret,
Lady of the ivied hall?

Cool, green meadow, ancient wood,
Sheltering many a tender brood
While the eager mother roves;
Your poor heart is not secure
With these passionless and pure
Clouds and breezes, fields and groves.

What is good, if love is dead?
Never loved who ever said:
What I give I now recall.
Only He who all things knows
Heeds the cry of cureless woes:
My heart 's broken, that is all.

DIVIDED HEARTS.

I HAVE seen it. Thou hast taken
Half my life, O mighty One.
Thou hast left me here forsaken ;
Finish what Thou hast begun.

Terrible art Thou. Oh, spare me !
Let me worship Thee afar.
Awful messenger, upbear me
Now to our immortal star.

There will we, forever sweeping
Round Thy distant glory, bow,
Heart to heart forever keeping,
Send me to her, send me now.

Dost Thou hear me, God of sorrow ?
Or must I in silence bend ?
Will it be the same to-morrow,
And to-morrow without end ?

Have compassion, though I see not ;
If Thou teach me, I shall learn.
Only, O dread Father, be not
Dark, when after her I yearn.

THE HUMAN CRY.

I.

WHEN to the instant-born, long grief has come
Exhausted Nature's sole relief, and dumb
I faintly gaze on vacant air,
Soothing the empty senses floats the strain
Of life's chance-blended myriad notes, till pain
Bids me anew arouse to care.

Now would I sweep the thousand strings, till all
Should answer me, and hidden things should call
On things revealed. Might I though learn
The need of pain, the distant good of ill :
If, the whole world misunderstood, I still
Shall ever-fainting, hopeless yearn !

Were anger better than this gloom, which weighs
Brooding, as if it would entomb the rays
Of love in living, beaming eyes ?
All, all in vain ! Folly to waste, in mood
As though blind Fortune e'er disgraced, the Good,
Hard-earned, unearned beneath these skies.

II.

Serve me, gentle winds that blow
 Idly wandering,
Fan my cheeks, that hotter glow,
 As I, pondering
Fate, my cruel fate would know.

Canst thou, sun in heaven, teach
 Naught but sensuous lore?
Can not all thy power reach
 Deeper to the core?
Were thine only human speech?

Soul I am, but more than soul;
 Can I not take flight
Unto thee, and with thee roll,
 Reveling in light,
Heedless sweeping to thy goal?

Thine were mine, while heart and brain
 Slept oblivion's sleep,
Till they life in death regain,
 We no longer keep
Vigil where was buried pain.

THE INDIAN LOVER.

LONG, long ago I dwelt in clay,
And yet it seems but yesterday
When she and I were young
Our wild playmates among;
She ran as speeds the frightened deer
When draws the stumbling hunter near.

Or stood demure to hide some prank
As still as trout 'neath shady bank,
And then, swift would she dart
With merry eyes and heart,
Out of my reach and far away
To where the shadows denser lay.

I see her stand beside the stream,
Watching the quivering moonlight gleam
Adown the waters, till
The pool received them, still,
And I with inward fire aglow
Waited to hear her Yes or No.

"To-morrow," said she, "I will —" Hark!
What brushed then yonder pine tree's bark?
They shrieked their fiendish yell,
I saw her as I fell,
But she was not among the slain;
To leave her was my only pain.

I rode the clouds in wintry sleet,
I brooded near in summer's heat,
 No trace of her I found ;
 And when I knew the ground
Had covered her, I rested not
But sought — in vain — the sacred spot.

In every dusky face I peer,
That hovers round our native sphere.
 I wonder if she too
 Searches the heavens through ;
Does she too every moment say,
It seems to me but yesterday ?

AT DAWN IN THE HOSPITAL WARD.

OH dear ! Why should I live and groan ?
Were I not better hence, alone ?
But where ? God knows ! if God there be.
If God, He pardons easily.

Oh, if my circling thoughts could end !
O thick, dull twilight, in which blend
This restless night and one more day,
Creep on ! I bade you not to stay.

More time to toss and turn a while.
“ Sister, some water, please ! ” That smile !
There is a God and He is love ;
He dwells within, nor all above.

He stooped and touched thine earthly grace,
Making thy heart His dwelling-place ;
Works in thy loving deeds His will.
Forgive, dear Lord ! Oh, love me still !

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